

Message Text

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SUBJECT: ECLIPSE 73

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 573 AND 574

SUMMARY: APPROXIMATELY 1000 VISITORS (350 OF THEM AMCITS) OBSERVED THE JUNE 30 TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE FROM MAURITANIA. WHILE WEATHER CONDITIONS WERE NOT PERFECT, ALMOST ALL EXPERIMENTS WERE AT LEAST PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL. BECAUSE OF CAREFUL ADVANCE PLANNING ON THE PART OF THE GIRM AND EXPEDITION LEADERS, THERE WERE ALMOST NO TECHNICAL OR BUREAUCRATIC DIFFICULTIES AND SURPRISINGLY FEW HEALTH PROBLEMS.

1. MOST OF THE CREDIT FOR SUCCESSFUL ECLIPSE 73 ACTIVITIES IN MAURITANIA BELONGS TO THE GIRM WHICH EFFICIENTLY ORGANIZED ITS TINY BUREAUCRACY TO COPE WITH THE DEMANDS AND REQUIREMENTS OF ECLIPSE EXPEDITIONS FROM NEARLY A DOZEN COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE US, USSR, FRANCE, ITALY, SWITZERLAND, BELGIUM, THE FRG, JAPAN, CANADA, THE UK AND SWEDEN. CUSTOMS, IMMIGRATION, LODGING AND TRANSPORT SERVICES WERE REVAMPED AT A COST OF NEARLY 1.5 MILLION DOLLARS IN ORDER TO COPE WITH AN EXPECTED 3,000 VISITORS. AS IT TURNED OUT, ONLY ABOUT 1000 FOREIGNERS ACTUALLY CAME TO MAURITANIA FOR THE EVENT. GIVEN THIS SMALL TURNOUT AND THE HIGH COST OF ECLIPSE PREPARATIONS, THE
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GIRM WILL REALIZE A SUBSTANTIAL LOSS ON THE ECLIPSE.
MOST MAURITANIANS, HOWEVER, SEEM TO FEEL THEY MADE A GOOD

BARGAIN IN TERMS OF INTERNATIONAL GOOD WILL. THIS SENTIMENT IS ECHOED BY ECLIPSE EXPEDITION MEMBERS WHO FOUND MAURITANIAN HOSPITALITY AND ASSISTANCE WITHOUT FAULT.

2. EMBOFFS VISITED EACH AMERICAN ECLIPSE OBSERVATION SITE AT LEAST TWICE DURING THE PRE-ECLIPSE PERIOD. THANKS TO PRESENCE OF DATT MONROVIA AIRCRAFT I WAS ABLE PERSONALLY VISIT EACH SITE IN THESE DAYS PRECEEDING THE EVENT AND EXPRESS APPRECIATION TO LOCAL OFFICIALS WHOSE COOPERATION HAD SO GREATLY FACILITATED OUR TEAMS' WORK. IN ALL CASES, WE FOUND EXPEDITION LEADERS HAD ESTABLISHED EXCELLENT RAPPORT WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND THE LOCAL POPULATION. AT CHINGUETTI, WHERE THE LARGEST CONTINGENT OF NSF-SUPPORTED SCIENTISTS WAS LOCATED, THE EXPEDITION DOCTOR SPENT ALMOST HIS ENTIRE WORKING DAY ASSISTING THE LOCAL NURSE IN GIVING MEDICAL TREATMENT TOWNSPEOPLE AND NOMADS, EARNING THE SPECIAL PRAISE OF THE LOCAL PREFECT. OTHER AMERICAN ECLIPSE EXPEDITION MEMBERS IN CHINGUETTI, NOUADHIBOU AND ELSEWHERE TOOK TIME TO EXPLAIN THE ECLIPSE PHENOMENON AND THEIR EXPERIMENTS TO INTERESTED MAURITANIAN OFFICIALS AND SCHOOL CHILDREN. THESE EFFORTS SUPPLEMENTED THE GIRM'S OWN HEAVY RADIO COVERAGE OF ECLIPSE ACTIVITIES WHICH BEGAN EARLY THIS YEAR AND INTENSIFIED DURING MAY AND JUNE.

3. IN SUM, ECLIPSE ACTIVITIES HERE WERE LABELED A SUCCESS BY ALL INVOLVED, (RESULTS OF AMERICAN EXPERIMENTS WERE REPORTED IN REFTELS) AND FORTUNATELY FEW OF THE PROBLEMS WE FORESAW MATERIALIZED. THERE WERE ALMOST NO DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED WITH CUSTOMS CLEARANCES OR SHIPPING OF VALUABLE SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT. THERE WERE NO SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS; THOSE AMCITS WHO SUFFERED FROM HEAT PROSTRATION HAD ALL RECOVERED BY ECLIPSE DAY AND NONE NEEDED EMERGENCY EVACUATION. AT THIS POINT, TWO-THIRDS OF THE 350 AMERICAN ECLIPSE OBSERVERS (INCLUDING FIVE JOURNALISTS) ARE ENROUTE HOME AND THE REMAINDER WILL FOLLOW LATER THIS WEEK. THOUGH FAR FROM PERFECT WEATHER CONDITIONS AND TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES FRUSTRATED SOME, MOST EXPEDITION

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PARTICIPANTS ARE DEPARTING WITH A FEELING OF ACHIEVEMENT.

4. AS FAREWELL GESTURE OF APPRECIATION, PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH IS PERSONALLY AWARDDING MAURITANIAN DECORATIONS TO LEADERS OF OFFICIAL TEAMS AND MAJOR TOURIST GROUPS; THIS INCLUDES SIX AMERICANS. MURPHY

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